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PRESS RELEASE

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTERS FROM GORNO-BADAKHSHAN CONFIDENT THEY CAN REDUCE SPREAD OF SICKNESSES, WITH THE HELP OF US EXPERIENCE

Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Ten educators, NGO workers, and doctors working to fight communicable diseases in the remote Pamir region of Tajikistan returned on October 4, 2007 from three weeks of professional exchange in Wisconsin. The trip was made possible through the Community Connections program funded by USAID.

During their stay in Wausau, Wisconsin, the group of disease prevention specialists met with their American counterparts at clinics, government agencies, and social service groups. The visits inspired the specialists from Tajikistan to introduce new approaches to disease prevention back home, including methods for conducting awareness campaigns using limited resources, involving parents in preventing drug use, and raising awareness of schoolchildren from twelve schools of Khorog.

Mohira Dustmamadova, Head of an NGO in Khorog combating the spread of HIV, was impressed that healthcare in the U.S. is actively and routinely evaluated by regular people through surveys, questionnaires and research.

Each member of the group lived with an American family during their stay in the U.S. Maram Azizmamadov liked how his American family managed resources. He noted that "American people do not spend money on expensive clothes, they spend it on healthy food and education." Azizmamadov leads an organization working to prevent HIV among youth in Khorog.

One member of the group, Obagul Islaeva, is the first US exchange visitor from the extremely remote town of Murgab where she is Chief Doctor at the State Sanitation and Epidemiology Center.

The entire group emphasized that increased government funding for healthcare treatment is critical to disease prevention in the Badakhshan region.

The Community Connections Program provides an important opportunity for citizens of the United States and Tajikistan to work together to address common professional challenges while expanding their social and cultural understanding. As business and professional communities of both countries rapidly become integrated, opportunities for positive relations between American people and the people of Tajikistan are increasingly important. The Community Connections Program offers community-based, three-to-five week practical trainings in the United States for business and professional organization leaders from Tajikistan.

The Community Connections Program is one of the many assistance projects implemented in Tajikistan by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on behalf of the American people. Since 1993 the American people through USAID have provided more than \$270 million in assistance programs that support economic growth, democratic institutions, health care, and education systems of Tajikistan.

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